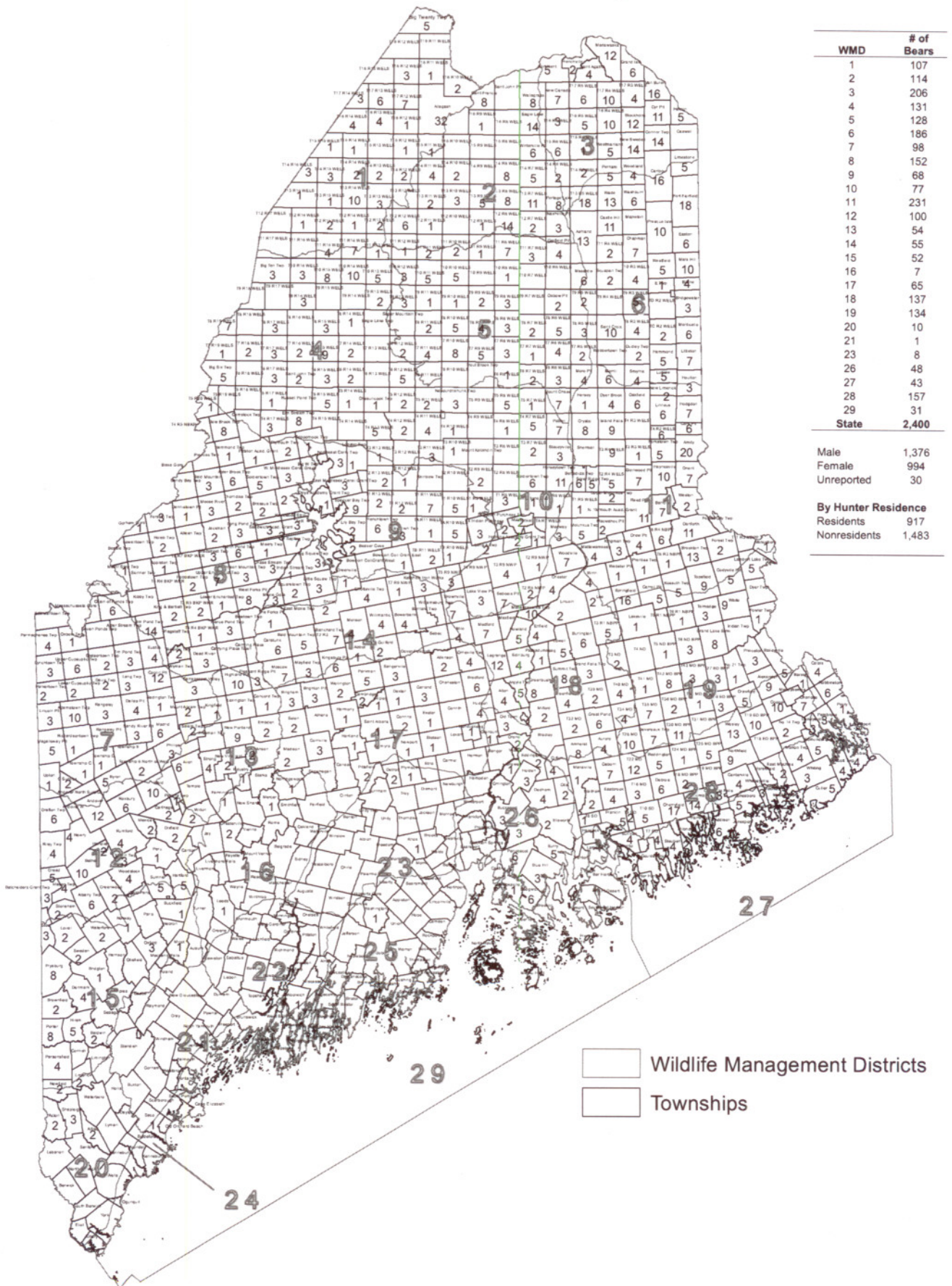


# 2011 Bear Harvest by Town





## **Maine's 2011 Black Bear Season**

The general hunting season for black bear in 2011 opened August 29 and closed November 26. Hunters were allowed to hunt bears near natural food sources or by still-hunting throughout this 3-month period. Hunting over bait was permitted from August 29 through September 24. The hound season overlapped the bait season, opening September 12 and closing October 28. The bear trapping season opened September 1 and closed October 31.

In 2011, 1786 bears were taken over bait (75%), 298 bears were taken by hound hunters (12%), 70 bears were taken in traps (3%), 102 were taken by unreported methods (4%), and 144 bears (6%) were harvested by deer hunters. Most bears were taken early in the season with 2,049 bears (85%) harvested before the end of September. The 2011 harvest of 2,400 bears is the lowest harvest since 1997.

For many years, the abundance of fall foods for bears has been high in even numbered years and low in odd numbered years which influence the numbers of bears harvested by hunters especially late in the season. This year (2011) was an exception to this rule, and fall fruit and nut crops were surprisingly abundant causing bears to remain actively foraging throughout deer season. This resulted in more bears being killed by deer hunters than any year since 2006 and reduced the bear harvest during the bait season.

### ***Geographic Distribution of the Harvest***

Bears were harvested in 26 of the 29 Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs). No bears were taken in WMD's 21, 24 and 25. The density of harvest expressed as the number of bears killed per 100 square miles of habitat (forested land) was greatest in WMD 3 at 25 bears/100 mi<sup>2</sup> followed closely by WMD 28 with 22 bears/100 mi<sup>2</sup>, WMD 6 with 17 and WMD11 with 15. In all other WMDs, hunters harvested less than 12 bears/100 mi<sup>2</sup> (statewide average of 9 bears/100 mi<sup>2</sup>). Bears were harvested in 14 of the state's 16 counties. No bears were taken in Kennebec and Lincoln counties and <5 bears were taken in Androscoggin, Cumberland, Knox, Sagadahoc and Waldo counties.

### ***Residence of Successful Hunters***

Maine's reputation for producing high-quality bear hunting was again reflected in the harvest distribution by hunter residency. Visitors to Maine killed 1,483 bears (62%) of the 2,400 bears tagged during 2011. Non-resident hunters shot most of the bears (68%) taken over bait and with the use of hounds (64%), although bait hunting remained popular amongst resident hunters with 62% of successful resident hunters taking their bear over bait. Although few bears were taken during the deer season or in traps, Maine residents accounted for the majority (85% and 74%, respectively) of the bears taken during those seasons.

### ***Assistance by Registered Maine Guides***

In 2011, guides helped take 77% of bears harvested over hounds, 71% of the bears taken over bait, 31% of trapped bears, and 3 of the bears taken by deer hunters. Guides assisted 190 residents (22%) and 1,337 nonresidents (92%) with their successful hunts in 2011.

### ***Sex and Age Distribution of the Harvest***

Males made up 57% (1,376 bears) of the 2011 harvest. Adult bears accounted for 93% (2,200 bears) of the harvest and sex and age were not reported for an additional 30 bears (1%).

### ***Prospects for the 2012 season***

The Department has adopted a generic bear season framework to maintain consistent hunting periods, unless management concerns require changes to the lengths of hunting or trapping periods. In 2012, the season will remain similar to those in recent years. The season will span 13 weeks and will begin on the last Monday in August and close on the last Saturday in November (August 27-November 24, 2012). Early indications are that the 2012 harvest will most likely far exceed that of 2011.

A population model of Maine black bears indicates the population can sustain a harvest of 15%. Thus a harvest of 3,500 bears was needed to stabilize Maine's bear population conservatively estimated at 23,000 bears in 2004. However, in recent years we have not met our harvest objective. This low harvest rate coupled with high cub